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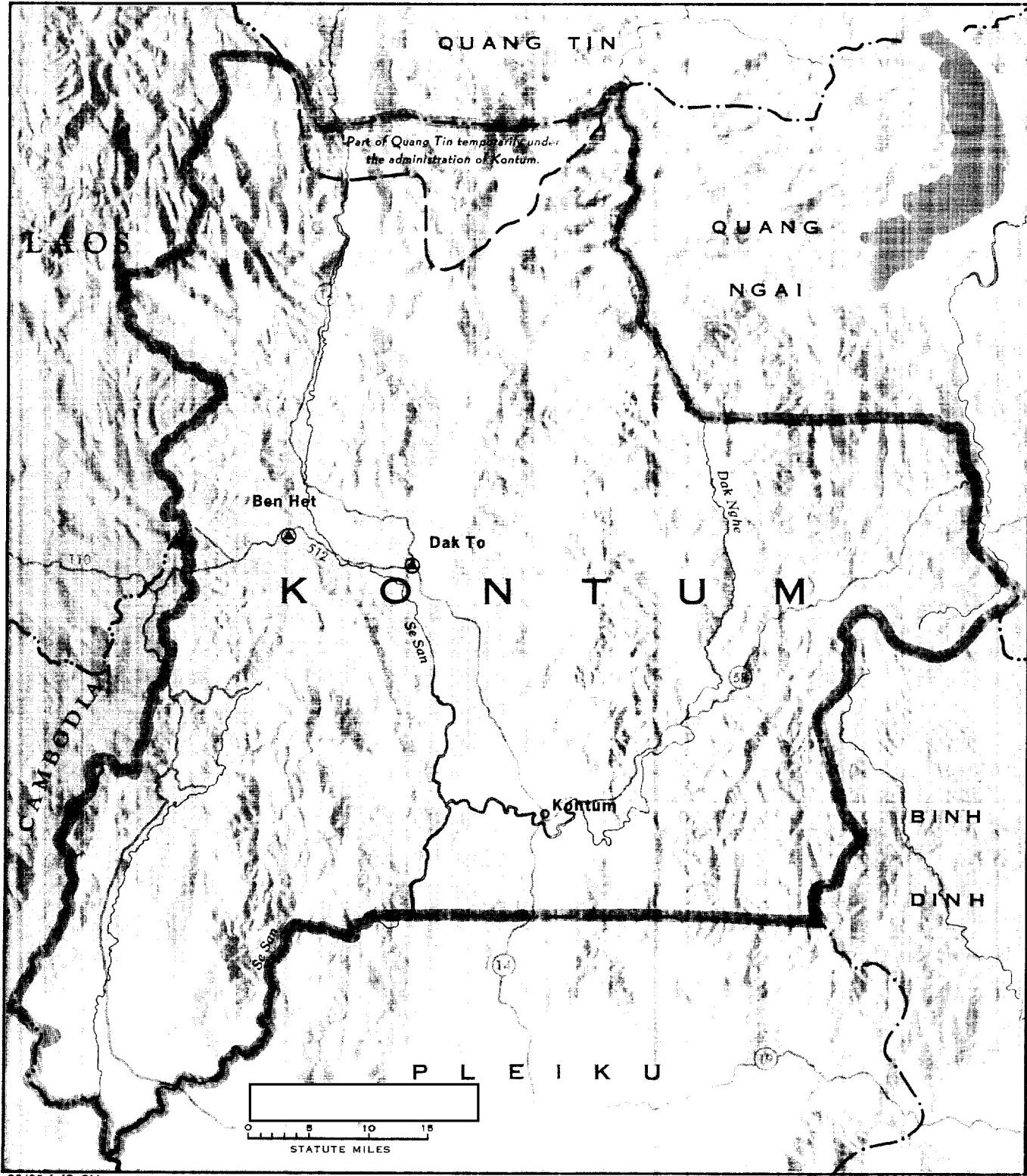
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Kontum Province



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¶ South Vietnam: Communist forces are maintaining pressure against the allied Special Forces camp at Ben Het in the western highlands, but elsewhere in South Vietnam enemy activity is at a low level.

Elements of the North Vietnamese 28th and 66th infantry regiments and the 40th Artillery Regiment have been harassing allied positions in the Ben Het area with shellings and limited ground probes almost daily since early May. Some of the heaviest action in this sector in recent weeks occurred on 23-24 June and included the first direct ground assault against the camp since the enemy campaign began.

Although US air and artillery resources are readily available for combat support, Ben Het and its neighboring combat base at Dak To are defended largely by South Vietnamese regular and paramilitary troops. Prisoners captured during recent engagements in this area claim that their unit's mission was to encircle and attack South Vietnamese Army units exclusively. The Communists may thus be seeking to force a major test of strength with the South Vietnamese military in a region in which they enjoy the advantages of terrain and easy access to cross-border sanctuary.

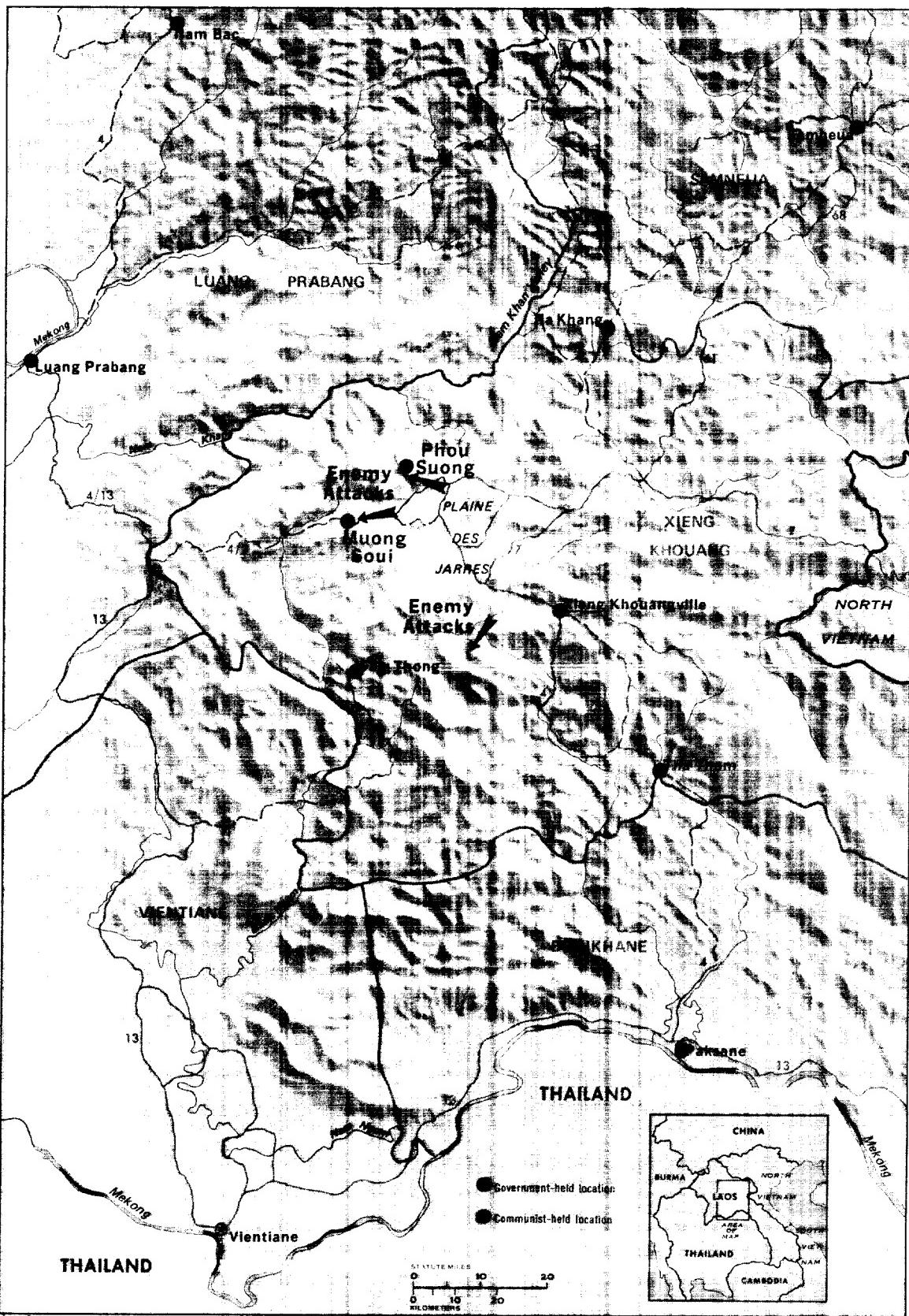
Moreover, there is evidence that the enemy intends to maintain pressure for a considerable period against these South Vietnamese bases in western Kontum, which it may consider vulnerable, perhaps with an eye toward an eventual thrust against the provincial capital of Kontum city. Such a course of action is suggested by reports that the Communists have, over the past few months, engaged in the highly unusual practice of pressing large numbers of infiltrated replacement personnel directly into battle rather than gradually absorbing them into existing units in base areas distant from the combat zone. [] (Map) []

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Communists Launch Ground Attacks Near the Plaine des Jarres



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Laos: Communist forces have launched a series of ground attacks against government positions near the Plaine des Jarres.

The action was highlighted by a sharp attack on 24 June against the neutralist headquarters at Muong Soui. At least two battalions of Communist troops supported by tanks overran a number of the base's outlying defense positions and inflicted light casualties on government defenders. The airstrip, however, remains in government hands and at last report the fighting had eased.

In apparently related moves, the Communists drove government troops from Phou Soung, a recently won position north of the Plaine, and hit government guerrilla outposts on the southern rim. These actions are almost certainly in response to General Vang Pao's recent effort to re-establish a government presence on the Plaine.

The attack against Muong Soui, however, is the first major action against that position in five years. It may have been intended as a commensurate response to the government's capture of the once inviolate Communist base of Xieng Khouangville. The attack may also have been launched for political reasons. In recent weeks the Communists have made a concerted effort to portray Communist "patriotic neutralist" elements as the "true representatives" of the neutralist faction. Such pretensions presumably would be furthered by the capture of the neutralist headquarters at Muong Soui.

(Map)

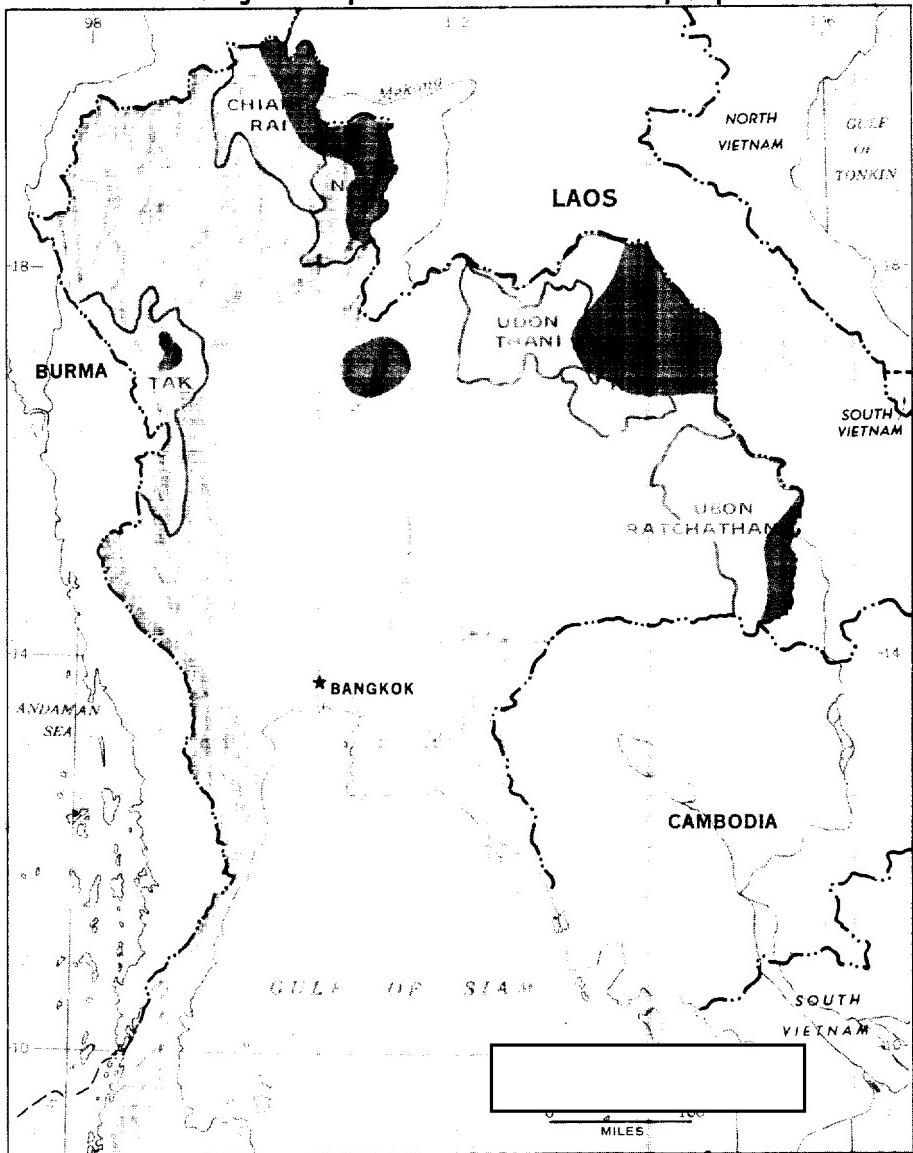
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Thailand: Insurgents Improve Positions in Widely Separated Areas



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Thailand: Communist insurgents continue to make headway in the north while they try to improve their assets in the northeast.

In the north and north-central provinces, the Communists are consolidating their control over tribal areas. Village propaganda meetings and sightings of larger insurgent bands attest to the insurgents' growing strength in Nan and Chiang Rai provinces. Village reports also indicate the guerrillas are strengthening their organization in Tak.

The guerrillas continue to harass government security forces, but incidents have become less frequent because several army units have been pulled out of the area for security duty in adjacent lowlands.

In the northeast, the guerrillas are apparently carrying out plans drawn up last December to pare down and strengthen their organization. An increased number of sightings of insurgents in Udon Thani and Kalasin provinces indicate the guerrillas may be establishing footholds in neighboring areas that are relatively free of government security forces. They are reported to have established new political and military training facilities in Kalasin. Bangkok has been particularly concerned over the spread of insurgent activity in southern Ubon Province, an area that is especially vulnerable because of the proximity of Laos-based Communist forces.

The guerrillas also continue to avoid armed encounters with superior security forces, although periodic Thai Army operations have resulted in some small unit clashes.

(Map)

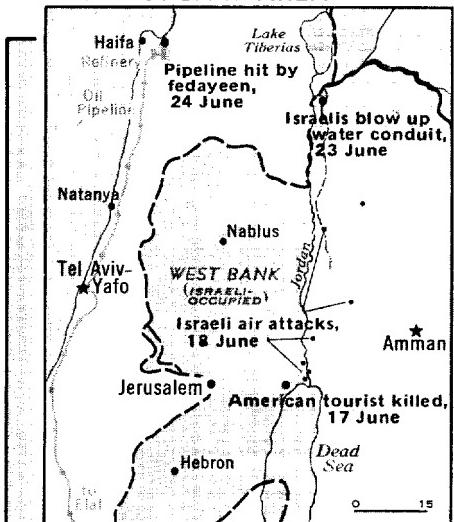
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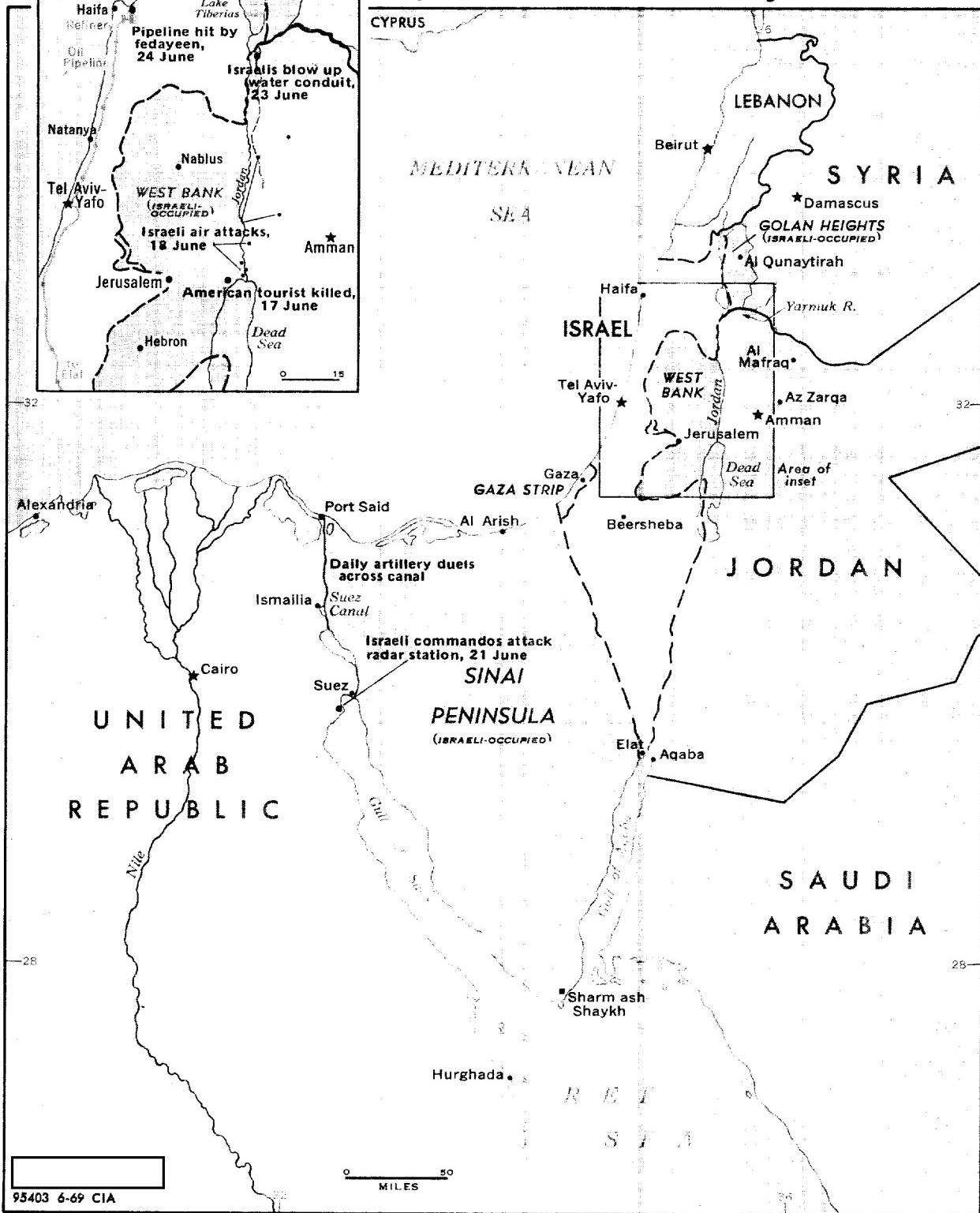
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THE WEST BANK AREA



Tempo of Incidents Quickens Along Cease-Fire Lines



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Arab States - Israel: The situation along the cease-fire lines has deteriorated recently as the tempo of incidents and reprisals has quickened.

Artillery duels across the Suez Canal are occurring daily again after a comparative lull during May. Egyptian commando raids across the canal have also been resumed. The fighting along the canal may be designed to placate more militant elements in Egypt who are growing more restive as the stalemate continues.

The number of incidents along the Israeli-Jordanian cease-fire lines has increased greatly following a "cooling-off" period in early June. An order by King Husayn prohibiting Jordanian Army units from initiating fire was apparently responsible for the lull. The death of an American tourist on 17 June as the result of shelling by an Iraqi unit stationed in Jordan signaled the beginning of a period of increasing tension in the Jordan Valley.

Israel has recently toughened its already tough retaliatory policy. The Israelis, frustrated over the unlikelihood of a peace settlement satisfactory to them and determined to hold fast, have been particularly irked at the new aggressiveness of the regular Jordanian forces. Last week the Israelis mounted heavy air attacks exclusively against Jordanian Army positions, and on 23 June they blew up a water conduit in the East Ghor Canal, a major irrigation facility.

The Israelis have been somewhat more relaxed about the Egyptian shellings along the Suez Canal because they are well dug in. The resumption of Egyptian cross-canal commando operations, however, has already prompted a counter Israeli commando attack on a radar station south of the canal, and other similar attacks are likely.

(continued)

Yesterday's Arab fedayeen attack on the Israeli oil pipeline just outside Haifa is certain to raise Israeli ire further, and bring new Israeli attacks against fedayeen bases in Jordan or Lebanon. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP), in an announcement from Amman, has claimed credit for the pipeline attack. The section struck was between the Haifa refinery and the port of Haifa. Israeli officials expect this line for refined products to be repaired within two or three days.

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(Map)

USSR-US: The Soviets did not attempt to harass two US destroyers which operated in the Black Sea from 18-22 June.

Although the US ships were subjected to air and surface surveillance, there have been no Soviet propaganda broadsides and no protests to Turkey. In the past, Moscow has threatened to hold Ankara responsible if US destroyers were allowed to enter the Black Sea with "armament exceeding the limitations" of the Montreux Convention of 1936. The Soviets have contended that the destroyers' antisubmarine rockets violate the convention.

Soviet reaction to these biannual visits has grown steadily calmer since 1967, when there were diplomatic protests and attempted rammings. In 1968 there was only slight harassment, and the notes to Ankara were pro forma, playing on Turkish domestic pressures against the US presence there.

The low-key Soviet reaction to the most recent visit is consistent with Moscow's apparent predisposition to avoid serious contention with the US at this time.

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UN-Disarmament: Prospects seem to be diminishing for further enlargement of the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC) before it reconvenes in July.

The USSR, at the close of the ENDC's last session, offered to admit Japan and Mongolia, two of the eight nations proposed by the US as a balanced enlargement package. US negotiators consented to the "partial enlargement" after obtaining Soviet agreement to discuss further enlargement during the ENDC's summer recess. Japan and Mongolia have been invited by the US and USSR, cochairmen of the committee, to join its next session on 3 July, despite some old members' preferences that the plan first be approved by the UN General Assembly.

Moscow, however, has ignored several US efforts to reopen enlargement discussions during the recess. Foreign Minister Gromyko has expressed fears that the ENDC is becoming a "small UN" where serious disarmament agreements are difficult to negotiate. The Soviets, who insist on their version of a strict East-West balance in the disarmament forum, show no signs of accepting the remaining six US-backed candidates as a package. Even if the Soviets should reopen the question now, no agreement seems likely by the opening date of the new session.

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Uruguay: President Pacheco imposed a limited state of siege yesterday morning to combat a mounting labor and political crisis. An arrest list with some 400 names, almost exclusively students and workers, has been made up.

Terrorist incidents have been increasing for the last few weeks and numerous strikes are in progress. In addition, Pacheco faces a challenge from powerful forces within his own party and among the opposition who hope to discredit him and force abandonment of his unpopular economic austerity programs. One opposition leader has threatened to start impeachment procedures over what Pacheco's opponents describe as an unconstitutional closing of a leftist newspaper.

The state of siege decree, which among other things prohibits meetings and propaganda "disruptive of public order," must be presented for congressional approval within 24 hours of its imposition, and Congress, in its present mood, may decide to limit its scope or to lift it immediately. Such a direct challenge to the President would provoke a new political crisis. Pacheco suffered a major defeat earlier this month when Congress voted to censure one of his key ministers. Another defeat, so soon after the first, would seriously damage his standing and could lead him to consider ways to maintain the state of siege unconstitutionally.

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Chile: The discovery of two terrorist bases could have serious political implications.

Police raids last week turned up a "guerrilla training school" in the Santiago area and an arms cache farther south. Bombs, weapons, and maps of military bases and other strategic locations were found at both sites. The discoveries are receiving broad press coverage and have been cause for increasing concern among the armed forces over the security of their bases.

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Police [redacted] claim to have evidence linking the "guerrilla school" to the Socialist Party, and the second find to the Movement of the Revolutionary Left, which is suspected of being the paramilitary arm of the Socialists. The Communist Party, which in Chile is less radical than the Socialists, has been critical in the past of Socialist tendencies to resort to violence, and any proof of ties between the terrorists and the Socialists could damage the Communist-Socialist political front. [redacted]

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NOTES

Pakistan: Four right-of-center political parties have merged, forming the Pakistan Democratic Party. Although the parties are small, their merger is a first step toward reducing the overabundance of political parties in Pakistan--one of President Yahya Khan's prerequisites for eventual scheduling of national elections. There are rumors, however, that additional new parties may be formed.

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[redacted]

[redacted]

* * * *

El Salvador - Honduras: Relations between the two countries have been troubled since 15 June as a result of excesses committed by over-enthusiastic Salvadoran soccer fans. Reports of harassment of the Honduran team and mistreatment of Honduran tourists by Salvadorans led to anti-Salvadoran demonstrations in Honduras. Hundreds of itinerant Salvadoran workers have now fled Honduras. In spite of government efforts on both sides to quiet the situation, feeling remains high in both countries. A scheduled playoff game between Honduras and El Salvador on 27 June in Mexico is likely to cause further disturbances which could affect economic relations and impede Common Market cooperation.

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[redacted]

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Haiti: President Duvalier's first public activity since his illness in early May indicates that he is still in firm control of Haiti. Over the weekend the President reviewed troops headquartered in Port-au-Prince and later took an automobile tour of the capital city on the fifth anniversary of his inauguration as "President-for-life." His appearance, which confirms reports that he has resumed his official duties, should squelch speculation that his control had weakened.

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[redacted]

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